GOING TO THE DOGS.

RUSSIA TO GET ALL OF THE SHAH'S DOMINIONS.

Land Acquired by Secret Treaty—Official Rascality and Lack of Roads—Railways That Would Not Pay.

[Teheran Letter in Times.]

Progress and all material improvement are impossible in Persia under the present state of things. The existing Government is of the Shah, by the Shah, for the Shah—that and nothing else. It is Orientalism in its worst form, and I will give you further on some proof of what I say. It is also my firm conviction that this country is doomed, and that its doom is close at hand. When I say "doomed" I mean merely to imply that the Government and its autonomy are going to the dogs at a break-neck rate. As for the country and its people, that is another question. I believe Persia under the control of any other Power—civilized, half civilized, or even uncivilized—would be much better off than under its present despotism exerted by the Kadjar dynasty. True, the independence of the Shah is a mere feigned and seeming thing a real one. Virtually he is in the hands of the Russians, who do with him what they please. For their own ends, however, they allow the present misgovernment to go on. In this connection a discovery I've made (and the facts in which are now for the first time published) will show you to what extent the nominal ruler of Persia is in the power of the Muscovites. A few weeks ago a secret treaty was made between the Shah and the Czar of Russia. By the terms of it a big slice of Persia, extending from close to the southeasternmost point of the Caspian sea—over 150 miles in length—to the southeast, and with an average width of 50 miles, to just south of Herat, along and surrounding in a semicircle Afghanistan, taking in such strategically important towns as Khabt, Turbat-Shaikh, Jama, and Khaf, was virtually ceded to Russia. To all intents and purposes it was, for not only is Russia given the sole right to keep as many troops there as she wants, (whereas the Shah is forbidden to do so,) but the whole civil and military administration is likewise given outright into the hands of Russia, and Persia is held to build a road connecting Merv and Meshhad. In case Persia fails in this latter obligation Russia will assume the privilege to build the road, and will be allowed to take her pay out of the revenues of the country. How thoroughly the Shah realizes that he is nothing but a puppet in Russia's hands, and how glad he is to have been "let off so easily"—just now—is also evidenced by his conferring a few days ago the highest decoration in his gift (a miniature portrait of himself, enclosed by and set in large diamonds and emeralds, which is very rarely given to Europeans,) to the Russian Minister here, M. de Mohnikow, and other decorations to the latter's diplomatic staff resident here. It will readily be understood that this ostentatious display of the royal favor on an occasion which must have been as nearly as harassing to the British diplomates as to the Shah has made the English wire-pullers white with rage, all the more as they can do nothing but swallow their wrathful feelings.

The advantages to Russia resulting from this treaty are twofold. They greatly strengthen Russia's strategic position in Bokhara, and she is enabled to build the railroad now running to Merv (about the building of which I was enabled to write you from Baku seven weeks ago) a good bit further, and she approaches the Persian Gulf by another one hundred and fifty miles, so that but a few hundred miles now divide the Russian railroads from that sheet of water. What the equivalent to the Shah was for all this has not transpired. I believe there was none, and I am confirmed in this belief by the answer the Shah made to Mr. Nicholson, British Charge d'Affaires here, when questioned as to his motives in taking such an important step. "What could I do?" said Nasr-ed-Deen. "They got their bayonets close to my throat, and what they are not given they will take." The whole treaty was concluded over the head and without the knowledge of the British, and nothing could mark better the complete decadence of British influence in the part of the East. None of the Persians potent in the councils of the Shah believe that England would fight Persia, let alone Russia, under any consideration or any provocation or insult. They consider the fighting days of Old England past and irrevocably over. It was different here once, but since the Crimean war, when England had to be helped by three other Powers to obtain a temporary advantage over Russia, since the disastrously stupid war with Persia in 1857 and the Indian mutiny following on its heels, the prestige of the tight little island has been steadily waning and that of Russia increasing as year by year the latter Power has added new conquests, new lands, new territory to her possessions. I had a talk lately with the Nalibes-Sultaneh, (third son of the Shah, Commander-in-Chief of the army, and Minister of War), who spoke very contemptuously of England, called it a "khoot-silik khir," (small thing), and said that the trading spirit ruled supreme over there, and that they were a nation of storekeepers, anyway. In the event of war England could not turn her back on India nor trust the fidelity of the natives; they would rise up and slaughter the English the first possible opportunity they had. It was different with Russia, the Nalib said, for the Asiatic possessions were joined right to the mother country, and Asiatics felt much more at home with and allied to the Russians, who gradually made Russians out of them, too, and did not squeeze them so hard as did the English their subjects in other climes. I've heard a good many similar, or even more adverse, opinions expressed here regarding England and her colonies.

As a matter of fact Russia can have Persia, or that portion of her she cares for, any time she chooses to will it. Russia has now three easy roads into Persia open to her; England none—at least no easy one, for she would have to go by sea and land at one of the few points on the Persian Gulf where a landing can be effected, such as Bender-Abbas, Bushire, Jashak, Chabbar, or Gwatar, from any one of which the march up the centre of the country to do actual fighting would be a most murderous, slow, and risky piece of business. True, Persia has an army of 200,000 men—on paper. In reality she has but a bare 30,000 to 35,000. The European military instructors, to whom the Shah pays large salaries, have not been able to accomplish anything worth mention in drilling and disciplining the Persian soldiers for a variety of reasons, two of which are that the instructors themselves are not able men as a rule, and that the Persian soldier lacks nearly everything to make a good fighting-machine out of when measured by the European standard. The only instructors here who have even measurably succeeded are the Russian Cossacks, and you can't make a war with Cossacks. With that the soldiers are poorly and irregularly paid, and are nearly all married, so that they would hail with joy the golden opportunity to desert to an enemy who would pay them better and more regularly. There is no such thing as patriotism known to the Persian—even the word does not exist in their vocabulary. The sort of obedience the Shah and his satraps exact and find is prompted solely by fear.

But aside from her weakness as a military Power there are many other reasons why Persia is going to the dogs. One of these is the atrocious mismanagement the country is groaning under. I don't know that I can give you an adequate idea of it. For it surpasses all belief. Russian administration—civil, military, and judicial—is proverbially rotten, but it is the very acme of pristine purity in comparison with the corruption reigning here. First of all, there is no real administration, for nothing is administered. It's simply a system of robbery—of graft and divide—on a large scale. No public works of any kind are attempted or projected. The higher offices are all farmed out to men more or less in the favor of the Shah or his favorite relatives and courtiers. They change hands whenever it is the pleasure of the Shah. If a man has the favor of the Shah he can commit the most despicable acts, can be guilty of bestial vices, can extort money out of those in his power by the most cruel methods and enrich himself at the expense of the country, can let his Province go to complete waste and ruin, and no one will be there to hinder him. On the other hand, the favor of the Shah withdrawn for never so slight a reason, and the best man must yield up his place to a new aspirant. The *quid pro quo*, again, that the office-holder pays for his office varies greatly. Thus, while the Governor of Ispahan, the Zil-e-Sultan, (shadow of the king,) who is the eldest son of the Shah and governs the whole south of Persia, including Arabistan, Farsistan, Ispahan, Yezd, and Kashan, pays but a half million of tomans a year—$750,000—to his father for the privilege of misgoverning and impoverishing those provinces, the Governors of Astrabad and Gilan have to pay more, although their revenues are not one fifth as large. There is no real system of taxation, but as a general rule it may be laid down here that the rich and powerful, nay, even the well-to-do and all office-holders, are exempted from taxation, and that the poorer the man the heavier the burden of taxation that falls on him. As there are no lists of property, real or personal, kept by the authorities, no control nor check could be exerted over the tax-gatherers, if such were intended. But in reality the tax-gatherers are merely sent to such or such a district and told to bring back from there a certain sum. How and from whom he raises that sum is a matter of utter indifference to the Governor.

It stands to reason that the tax-collector, under such circumstances, is invariably a man open to arguments, and the more people with persuasive tongues he excuses from taxation the more people unable to bribe him have to make up for it. The most terrible acts of cruelty are frequently practiced by these men in the exercise of their functions—after this fashion: I heard of a case a few days ago in the neighborhood of Kotum, where a small land-holder had been hubed to a stake and thus left exposed to the broiling sun without food or drink for days till he betrayed the hiding-place of his neighbor—his son-in-law—who had run away to evade paying taxes. The victim afterward died from the effects of this treatment. All such occurrences are made light of by the Persian officials as not worth your breath or notice. Many Governors when they come into office are loaded down with debt and probably get the office from the Shah to restore themselves financially. Of course they make haste to retrieve their fortunes, and are not at all particular how they do it. The aforementioned Zil-es-Sultan, for instance, tortured, bailed, and executed with the most refined cruelty many people in his district who would not beggar themselves to accommodate him. He used to seize and buy up all the grain in a certain province when a famine threatened and then sell it at his own price—an enormous one—when the hard times had come. By such means as these the man has become extensively wealthy—he is thought to be worth 15,000,000 tomans ($22,500,000)—and now poses occasionally as a philanthropist. Yet the only officials in his pay who receive their salary regularly and uncurtailed even now are the soldiers, and these are paid by him because he means to try and make himself the successor of his father by force, for although the oldest son he is not the heir nor the favorite of his father. He is the son of a woman who was a slave in his father's early days, and by the treaty of Turcomanchoi, no slave child of the King's may become ruler in Persia. Thus the second son, who is now Governor of Tabriz, is the heir, and Mossoud Mirza, the oldest, does not like it. As a matter of fact, the oldest is the better of the two, for, although cruel, avaricious, and grasping, like his father, he has considerable energy and some idea of science and progress, while the second prince is a weakling, completely the tool of designing, hypocritical priests, and with more unmanly vices than the first-born. There will be blood on the moon when the Shah dies, as these two will fly at each other's throat, and there may be even a *gone-you-please* fight growing out of it all, as the third son, the Najib-es-Sultaneh (the favorite of the Shah), may also take a hand in it—always supposing that Russia has not annexed the whole or the better part of Persia ere all this comes to pass. And as this corruption and vampire system prevails in high places, it also does in the lower and lowest. Everything goes by bribery, trickery, and crooked means. You cannot engage a servant but what he has to pay another man on entering your service—either the man who first suggested this particular candidate to you or your head servant, or both. Of course he gets square with you by stealing from and cheating you from the first to the last day he is in your employ. The Persian calls all such profit arising from a more or less troubled and impure source by a peculiar name, "modakhil," which may be rendered as "commission," and you do not eat a mouthful of bread, you cannot buy a horse or a cigar without your servants getting their modakhil out of it. The Persian does not like any place, no matter if the honest remuneration be large, where he has no chance for modakhil. Europeans here have, for example, often tried to make their employés go without modakhil by paying them a corresponding increase in salary and making a special agreement to that effect; but it does not work. Their men get their modakhil as of old and the higher pay besides. Thus from top to bottom corruption reigns supreme.

A country with a government such as this, with bribery and all sorts of dishonesty deeply engrafted, cannot prosper. Yet there are other things, such as the lack of means of communication, for instance, to make Persia go down deeper and deeper into the mire. There are no roads here at all—merely the thin tracks made by the camels and mules that have tramped over the rocky soil for thousands of years. These tracks often lead in zigzag lines from one place to another, and quite eccentric on the whole. Frequently the track is not distinguishable. Of course there are no railroads. It has been talked of during late years, however, to build a road—several roads, in fact—but nothing tangible has yet come of it all. I suppose you know about the grant made by the Shah to Baron Reuter, of London, some ten years ago. It was very comprehensive—a little too much so, perhaps, for it included not alone the sole right to build railroads, but gave away nearly every other franchise as well—telegraph, too—against a percentage on the gross receipts. A contract was made, and 175,000, I believe, was deposited by Baron Reuter in a London bank as a guarantee of good faith, but the Shah broke his word, and has since been vainly urged to come to time. The 175,000 is still in bank. Since then the Russians were granted a similar franchise once, but nothing came of that either. As the Russian machinations had prevailed against the English speculator, so now doubtless the English influence prevailed against the Russians. As a last shed-another the Shah has been attempting of late to draw American capital into Persia for railroad-building purposes, but without avail so far, I am happy to say. Two or three schemes of that kind have broken down when hardly beyond the budding stage, and the bursting of the last bubble of this kind happened but two months ago. The American surveyors and engineers, who had gotten as far as London, went home again. The trouble is that no railroad would pay here. The Persians, too, have the same idea about America that the Europeans have—viz., that there are too many nabobs in our country, and that it is a boon to humanity to relieve them of at least a portion of their Pactolian stream. That is why they have lately tried to inveigle Americans into becoming railroad-builders here. I have told those Persians that I have talked with very frankly that, although there undoubtedly is a good deal of money in America, our capitalists were in the habit of not throwing their money away, and wanted first to know if there would be a reasonable prospect of having a good return for their coin, which I did not believe to be the case in the present instance.

You see there are several very grave obstacles in the way: First of all, Persia is a thinly-populated country, although large. It has in its centre an immense tract of waste, sterile land, a salt desert. It is sunned all over, right and left, fore and aft, with chains of high mountains, very difficult to get over by reason of their steep ascent. It is bare of woods save in the district along the Caspian. Although having no large rivers there are innumerable small ones, which during certain months of the year rise high and are very turbulent. The people of Persia are not travellers, and, as time is not now an object to them nor will be for a considerable while to come, their goods are sent very cheaply, and, on the whole, safely and to their own satisfaction, by caravans, on the backs of asses, mules, or camels, and it would be difficult to break them of the habit of 4,000 years' standing. Lastly, the Government will not give proper guarantees. With the English the building of a transverse railroad is, in view of the prospective immense increase to Indian trade, and also in view of its strategic importance, a vital question, and with the Russians for the same reason. In course of time these reasons will become so potent to them that a road or roads will be built, but it ought not to be built with American money, for it would be a losing venture—sure pop! I do not say but what a short line or two, under favorable circumstances, and luck being on their side, might be built at a profit, but I doubt even that as yet.

A word or two might be said here about the advisability of maintaining a diplomatic representative of the United States here. I think, on the whole, it is not at all advisable. The interests of the United States in this country are of the vaguest and most infinitesimal nature. There are, all told, barely a score of Americans, male and female, in this country. They are missionaries and their assistants. They cannot and do not now venture, when protected by an American Minister, to make Presbyterians and other Protestants out of the Moslem Persians—a thing which is made a capital offence by the law of the land. They do make converts among the Armenians and Nestorians, but against that the Persians have no objection—quite the other way; so there is no opposition to their missionary labors on the part of the Government. Besides the n there is nobody and nothing to protect or to fight for here—no real work to be done by an American Minister. It did not take the new Minister to Persia, Mr. Winston, long to ascertain the above fact, nor did he hesitate to express his disgust at an office which, outside of a certain amount of stupid red tape, gave him no chance to exert himself or work for his country and countrymen. The role which the American Minister here, as a sample fact, has to play is to look on and see how the Russians and English are trying to outwit and "hoodoo" each other—an onerous and exciting task, in which he is ably seconded by the representatives of France, Turkey, Germany, and Austria. The last two Powers, however, have not been represented here very long, nor are they likely to keep the thing up much longer. If I were put on the witness stand and asked what I thought had best be done with the American Mission at Teheran, I'd say: Abolish it! There's nothing in it but official "logo" of the fogoest kind. Of course for a man who likes to lie on his back, smoke the ghalyan, and drink tea in winter and sherbet in summer until he is full to the top, this would be the ideal place. For such I can honestly recommend the position. But for a live man—a man with an object in life and some activity—it is in truth a wretched place.

ENGLAND'S MAYTIME.

A TRIP TO THE WOODS AND TALK OF THE CONGO.

What an African Forest is Like—Escaping Shipwreck by Being Shipwrecked.

A Tillingbourne (Surrey) letter says: All is arranged at last for our visit to the Congo, and, as matters have turned out, the delay is all in our favor. Major Parminter, the former head of Vivi Station, on the Lower Congo, and one of the best fellows on the whole staff, is going out again, and will probably take passage by the same steamer as ourselves. Major E. Francis Veitch, Stanley's chief of transport on the Lower Congo—whose expected mission to the Niger I mentioned last week—seems likely to be transferred to the Congo instead, in which case he, too, will be of our party. Stanley himself may not improbably go in the same direction before long, and his arrival will unquestionably give a great impetus to sundry schemes of local traffic which are now springing up along the Lower Congo, whereof I shall have more to say in my next letter.

But apart from all this good company on the way, our voyage itself seems arranged on purpose to be as agreeable as possible. This time our steamer is to omit altogether the scene of our last year's shipwreck, as well as the objectionable ports of the Gold Coast, where in perfectly fine weather you may perhaps be able to land once in three times, while in rough weather you will never be able to land at all. Even more satisfactory is it to learn that we are not to pass the customary three days amid the foul and fever-stricken swamps of the Niger Delta, which fully deserves the ominous reputation assigned to it in the popular couplet:

"Beware, beware of the Bight of Benin,
For one that comes out there were forty went in."

In fact, this one coast has given a bad name to the whole of the Dark Continent in the eyes of the many worthy people who forget that Africa is somewhat larger than Belgium or Scotland, and contrive to trouble for the safety of friends on the breezy slopes of the Atlas mountains because men are ill of fever on the Niger, more than a thousand miles away, on the other side of the Sahara desert. Nothing would seem too startling or incredible to be believed of that great modern bogey, an "African fever." Only the other day a man to whom I was telling how Stanley had been attacked in Africa by 122 fevers asked in an awe-stricken whisper whether he had had them all at once.

Nor are we less fortunate in our selection of the African ports at which we shall touch than in our rejection of those to which we shall give the slip. First on the list is Santa Cruz, that dainty little toy town which lies slumbering in the mighty shadow of the Peak of Teneriffe, with the blue Atlantic sparkling all around it in the glorious tropical sunshine, and telling no tales of the hundreds of mangled corpses which it enrolled on that fatal night when Nelson himself assailed the island fortress in vain. Then follows Grand Canary, an "enchanted island" worthy of Prospero himself, with its vast crescent of smooth white sand outspread like a marble pavement between the blue shining sea and the green, sunny slopes that rise star above star into the warm, dreamy southern sky. Equally picturesque in another way is the wonderful isle of Fernando Po, with the terraces of its wood-crowned hills building themselves up, like the wall of a castle, thousands of feet above the gnashing ring of white-fringed breakers that foam and roar against the crumbled cliffs below. At a time like the present there are few places better worth visiting than the new German settlement of Cameroons, where the good Prince Bismarck has done more done he best to merit the comfortable destiny foretelled by Moses to "him that removeth his neighbor's landmark." Artists and poets alike might find abundant material in Portugal's queer little twin islets off the southwest coast, Sao Thomé (St. Thomas) and Principe (Prince), which when seen on the map appear to be stuck like clothespegs right upon the equatorial line itself. Leaving these behind we may hope for a passing peep into the mouth of the Gaboon river, the seat of these ingenious Frenchmen who are now claiming various tracts of country that do not belong to them on the strength of having magnanimously given up other tracts that they never possessed. Then southward along the coast past Landana, Black Point, Lounge, &c., till at length we sweep round the broad, flat, sandy triangle of Banana Point, and see the mighty Congo pouring into the sea at the rate of six or seven knots an hour the reddish-brown current that it brings down from the far-off uplands, where Africa's dirty fountains roll down their muddy sand and make a sad mess of the "stainless ocean" by doing so.

At Banana Point the incoming steamer is usually met by one of the light river steamboats which carry passengers and stores up the Congo as far as the rapids permit, halting for the night at the missionary station of Boma or Embomma, eighty miles from the sea, and reaching Vivi on the following morning, about thirty miles further up the stream. But the river voyage, although slow (as it may well be against such a current), is anything but sure. Stanley told me not long ago that had we not been shipwrecked on our way out to the Congo last summer we should have been wrecked in the Congo itself on our arrival, the steamer which came down in the expectation of meeting us having capsized on her way back up the stream, so that we would have escaped the sharks of the ocean only to be gobbled up by the crocodiles of the river.

The popular belief in Africa's wealth seems quite as deeply rooted as that in her unhealthiness, strengthened no doubt by the recent discoveries of silver in the Niger basin and of gold on the inner edge of the Ashanteе territory. Only a few days before I sailed from New York a certain imaginative gentleman there suggested to me to do a little "diamond trading" in his interest when I got to the Congo! He probably imagined that the native children about the river play at marbles with diamonds, and that Stanley uses them instead of gravel to pave his new road to Isangila. But in point of fact, all is not diamond that glitters, and it would need the eye of a journalist to discover any diamonds on the Lower Congo except those which figure in packs of cards. However far to the south we go in the new State we shall still be many hundreds of miles from those wonderful "South African diamond-fields" which, in theory, are a paradise of untold wealth, while in reality you cannot get an ordinary cabbage there for less than 5s. and most other things are in proportion. They managed matters a good deal better in the olden time, when, according to the author of the first hand-book of European travel on record (published in 1563), it was possible to breed diamonds as one now breeds sheep and cattle: "Other diamonds are found in Arabia, but they are not so good; they be browner and more tender. And others are found also in Cyprus, and likewise in Macedonia; but the best and most precious are in India. They are square and pointed of their own kind, above and beneath, without work of man's hand. They grow together, male and female, and are nourished by the dew of heaven; and they do commonly engender and bring forth small children—even little diamonds—which do multiply and grow all the year. And I myself have oft times tried the experiment that if a man keep them with little of the rock and wet them with May dew often they shall grow every year, and the small will grow great, for as a fine pearl waxeth great by the dew of heaven, even so doth the true diamond, and as the pearl of its own nature taketh roundness of shape, so the diamond, by the virtue of God, taketh squareness."

The English sky has cleared once more after a three-days' crying fit of unusual energy, and the wooded hills around us are looking as bright and beautiful as the "Delectable Mountains" of Bunyan, although hapily free from those insufferable shepherds who put the tired and footsore pilgrims through such an exhausting course of sightseeing. This must indeed be a phenomenal year to have given us only one spell of rain during the first two weeks of May, for, as a rule, the boast of a British spring are plentiful as those of a certain famous novel of the last century, to which a mischievous editor prefixed an index minutely registering all the forty-six bursts of weeping performed by the various characters in the course of the tale, "chokings, &c., not included." "Mr. Ker," said a good old missionary who entertained us at Allahabad five years ago, when we were working our way along the valley of the Ganges, "you don't think what a relief it is to me to have five whole months in which I needn't end every invitation with 'weather permitting.'" But just as Donald McAlpine's sons were said by his admiring wife to be "a great relief to conversation," it must be owned that the showers of May are a priceless addition to the beauty of English scenery. When the trees stand thick with living green and the glad chord of the birds fills the air, and the lately shrunken brooks rush downward with a joyous gurgle from the shadowy thickets to dance and sparkle in the sunlight, and the parched, yellowish grass springs up again fresh and bright in the fulness of a new life, with a tiny rainbow upon every blade, then indeed every one may well rejoice in nature's holiday, except the thick-skulled cloddhoppers who have lost what little feeling they ever had, and the tasteless excursionists who have never had any to lose.

Who would remain pent up between four walls on a day like this when one has only to pocket one's writing materials and plunge at once into the fragrant shadow of the fir woods—a better studio than hand of man has ever built? Away we go past snug little cottages embowered in twining creepers, and all alive with the merry voices of the children, whose rosy faces peep from every doorway—past broad, brown ponds still haunted by the spirits of the "fine old British farmers" in the appropriate shape of fat geese—past quaint old country houses half buried in trees, with the tall, slender chimneys, peaked roofs, and deep, shadowy porches of the last century—past wide, green, sunny meadows, dotted with grazing sheep and bright with golden cowslips. It is pleasant to see as we pass the door of yonder queer little lozenge-paned school-house tarrawn open and a flood of red-checked boys and flaxen-haired girls pouring forth with shouts of glee; for on such a morning these restless little bodies will be better employed in gathering wild flowers, climbing trees, paddling in the brook, or running races across the village green than in sitting boxed up in a hot school-room upon hard benches, studying the interesting but scientific and unpoetical statement that "A was an Archer who shot a Frog, B was a Butcher who had a fair Dog."

And now comes a steep, winding path up a bold curving ridge, on either side of which, through a green mass of clustering leaves, the taper stems of the silver birches rise tall and slender and shining as the columns of some fairy palace. Beyond this we come out upon a vast breadth of ploughed land in which several hardy fellows are working manfully in the blazing noonday sun, while a small white dog, with his fore paws planted firmly on the jacket which his master has set him to guard, greets us with a shrill little bark of defiance as we go by. Then a sharp turn to the right, and all in one moment the dazzling sunshine melts into the rich purple twilight of the woods, in the deep, dreamful stillness of which all the cares and troubles of the outer world are blotted out as if they had never been.

As we cast ourselves on a soft cushion of moss at the foot of a mighty fir and take out our pen and paper a strange gleam of sunshine filtering through the overarching boughs makes a dim rainbow on the glittering back of a small lizard which passes doubtfully past in front of us for a moment and then skurries away into the tangled undergrowth, which is still thickly strewn with the dead leaves of last autumn. A squirrel darts like an arrow up the nearest pine, and then having reached a safe height, saluts us with a saucy whisk of his bushy tail and a quick, mocking glance of its small, bright eye. A tiny bird, perching on a slender branch a few feet overhead, twitters merily as the swaying bough swings it to and fro. And now a splendid butterfly, gorgeous with all the richest hues of purple and gold, hovers above us for a few seconds with expanded wings, and then flits away into the deeper shadows, seeming to carry with it through the gloom a ray of that cloudless sunlight from which it has come. But it will not do to loiter here too long, for the day is wearing on, and while others go a-Maying we must go a-marching on. So away we tramp again through shadowy glade and boisty dell, by sleep banks slippery with fallen pine needles, down into gloomy hollows where the woodmaids are not been busy, and the felled giants lie strewn like the dead upon a hard-fought battlefield. Many a slip do we meet with and more than one rock and tumble. But, after all, what is any English wood, however thick and tangled, to those which await us on the Congo? This is what an African traveller has to say about African forests, and I can vouch for the truth of his description from my own experience:

"Overhead the wide-spreading branches each branch heavy with brood, thick leaves interlaced each other and absolutely shut out the daylight. We knew not whether the day was sunshiny or foggy and dull, for we marched always in a solemn twilight. All this time the trees kept shedding their dew upon us like rain in great round drops. Every leaf seemed weeping. Down the boles and branches, the creepers and vegetable cords, the moisture trickled and fell on us. Twenty feet above our heads an either side towered the horrible undergrowth—the lower world of vegetation—which surrounded all the space beneath the shade of the pillared bombax and the mastlike mvnid. It consisted of ferns, speargrass, watercane, orchidaceous plants mixed with wild vines, cable thicknesses of the *ficus elastica*, a sprinkling of mimosas, acacias, and tamarinds, illanas, palms of various species, the wild date, elais, fan, raffian, and a hundred other varieties. All these were struggling for every inch of space, and swarming upwards with a luxuriance and density which only this extraordinary hothouse atmosphere could nourish."

The chime of falling water suddenly strikes our ears, and a tiny waterfall, swollen by the recent rains, is seen slipping from ledge to ledge of a moss-grown cliff in successive spouts of glittering spray, which are outlined very effectively against the background of dark-green leaves till it sinks at length, as if exhausted, into the deep, still, shadowy pool below, like some weary wood genius, who, after a brief and troubled career on earth, has found in death that peace which life denied him. Just beyond it we plunge suddenly into a dismal hollow, upon which the shadows of the trees fall darkest and deepest, making it as black and ghostly as that gloomy spot in Kingsley's famous poem, where

"The black, sour hatchs covered over
The blood of a murdered man."

A little further on comes a still more unpleasant phenomenon—viz., a vast patch of puddle-water and half-liquid mud, which, like Apollyon in Bunyan, spreads itself across the whole breadth of the way, and is not to be avoided by any strategy. So through it we go as best we may, at first picking our way coolly and carefully, getting gradually excited as we plunge ankle-deep into puddle after puddle, and at last trampling savagely through the very slop-pest part with a stern satisfaction in the consciousness that nothing can befall us worse than what has happened already.

But this latter is amply repaid a few minutes later, when the wood ends as suddenly as if swallowed up by an earthquake, and we pass at one stride into a new world. From the spot where we stand the ground falls away in one great plunge (now a sheet of living green) down to a broad, smooth lake, sentinelled on either side by a line of giant oaks, bright with all the leafy richness of early summer. Far down the valley stands a solitary house, a large, gloomy mansion of hewed stone, which, in its cold and lonely dignity, seems a type of some proud but poverty-stricken noble, secluding himself from a world where he can no longer lord it among the best.

One sound alone breaks the stillness. From the far distance comes a dull, strange noise, half rattle and half rumble, warning us that even here we are not quite beyond the reach of the unresting railway. In truth, go where one will, it is not easy to escape from the haunting presence of the world of bustle and noise. This very morning my seclusion was disturbed by the arrival of a heartrending letter from my London publishers, imploring me to "modify" something that I had made Stanley say or do in my forthcoming book on the Congo, as if the great explorer had no other engagement than to read everything that is written about him and see how he likes it.

I wonder, by the by, whether the fashion of prefaces will ever follow that of dedications into the realm of the things that have been. When it does so the world will certainly lose little by its disappearance. It is but easy to see how either a book or its author can be benefited by declaring that "this work was never intended to meet the public eye, and is now published solely in compliance with the reiterated entreaties of valued friends," when everybody knows that the work was intended from the very first to meet as many public eyes as could be got to look at it, and that the only entreaty made to the writer by his valued friends was "not to make a fool of himself by printing such rubbish." Nor can I perceive the advantage of a half-page appeal to "the indulgence of a generous and enlightened public," when nothing is more certain than that the generous and enlightened public will either never read the appeal at all, or will not care a straw for it if they do. A far more appropriate form of address, in my opinion, would be that which I should have prefixed to my first book, "On the Road to Khiva," had it not been for some unaccountable objections on the part of my publishers: "This work has cost me infinitely more trouble than it is worth, but should it succeed in boring my readers half as much as it has bored me I shall not have written in vain."

Baron Fava, the Italian Minister, has sailed for Italy on a three months' leave of absence.

PRAYER AND POLITICS.

Rev. J. G. Butler, Chaplain of the United States Senate.

The reverend gentleman who officiates as Chaplain of the United States Senate, was elected without opposition. He had held the position of Chaplain of the House of Representatives in the Forty-first, Forty-

second, and Forty-third Congresses. An old resident of Washington, he is acquainted with the leading statesmen of the country, and his candidacy for the chaplainship of the Senate implied success.

The Rev. J. G. Butler is a native of Cumberland, Md. He received his preparatory education at the County Academy, and in Pennsylvania College and Seminary, Gettysburg, Pa. Adopting the clerical profession he attended a theological institution, was ordained to the ministry, and began a pastorate at Washington, of which he has been a citizen ever since.

He was a staunch Union man at the period of southern secession, and in April, 1861, was appointed chaplain of the Fifth Pennsylvania volunteers. This position he held until the virtual close of the war, when General Lee surrendered his army. He was afterwards made chaplain of Union hospital. Later he filled the same office in the Chilliburn and Lincoln hospitals.

When he resumed the duties of the regular pastorate it was as minister to the Luther-Place Memorial church at Washington, of which he was the founder. Here he still continues to preach. His church and congregation, led by their pastor, are eminent for their philanthropy. They founded the "Church of the Fatherland," a mission to the Germans in this country, and the Church of the Redeemer for the freedmen. Mr. Butler's interest in the colored people of this country is also shown in his connection with Howard University, Washington, in the theological department of which he is Professor of Church History and Homiletics.

The Chaplain is a Lutheran in faith, and regularly contributes to the publications of his Church. He occasionally writes for the secular press.

The Boston Society of Architects is trying to raise $5,000 for the erection of a monument in Trinity church in that city to the memory of the architect, the late Mr. Richardson.

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SUMMER RESORTS.

THE HYGEIA HOTEL,
OLD POINT COMFORT, VIRGINIA.
The Hygeia Hotel will continue to be operated under the same liberal policy which has always characterized its management, and while a great reduction has been made in the rates for the summer of 1886, the highest standard of excellence will be maintained.
After June 1st, the terms for double rooms occupied by two persons will be $2.50, $3 and $3.50 per day; $15, $17.50 and $21 per week, and $50, $60 and $75 per month each, and single rooms, $2, $2.50, $3, $3.50 and $4 per day; $12.50, $15, and $24.50 per week; $60 and $75 per month.
For further particulars send for illustrated descriptive pamphlet. F. N. PIKE, Manager.
ap 28-1Aug

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my 19-2m

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C. A. COLSHORN, General Manager.
my 27-6w

HO, FOR BUCKROE!—TWO MILES EAST OF OLD POINT, ON CHESAPEAKE BAY. Open APRIL 15TH for Spring and Summer Boarders. Attractions: Surf Bathing, Boating, Fishing and Dancing. Special rates furnished Excursion Parties. Bathing Free. For particulars address MRS. M. A. HERBERT, Post-Office Box 14, Hampton, Va.
ap 16-3m

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WEST VIRGINIA.
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